



## **Student Representatives**

By: Will Keck

Jaden Deal

Contact: Will Keck | Waukee, IA | [willkeck21@gmail.com](mailto:willkeck21@gmail.com)

Jaden Deal | Norwalk, IA | [jadenddeal@gmail.com](mailto:jadenddeal@gmail.com)

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### **Position Statement:**

*The State of Iowa Youth Advisory Council supports legislation encouraging student liaisons on district school boards and the department of education.*

### **Position**

It is the position of the State of Iowa Youth Advisory Council, the voice of Iowa's youth, that legislation encouraging student liaisons to serve with Iowa school districts' school boards and the Iowa Board of Education be enacted. This would give students more say in their district policies and get more students involved in their school and harvest better communication between administration and the school board, with the student body.

### **Rationale**

Students within Iowa have long been representatives of change, within education and social activism. Student organizational groups such as our own SIYAC, Youth Leadership Initiative, Iowa Student Learning Institute and Community Youth Concepts, to name a few, have been paving the way for student voice and representation. Iowa's students have been working in groups like these for years in an effort to expand creative ideas and youth leadership, but progress can be faster.

The purpose of Iowa's school boards is to operate in the best interest of students and help them receive a better education. Most school board members are parents, teachers, and active community members. The problem many school board members face is they are on the outside of student life. Board members decide how the school will operate, but without the knowledge of the students' point of view. With the addition of a student liaison to the school board, the board members can receive an accurate picture of student life at the school, and hear from student perspectives on how their policies are affecting the student body.

The most important and central part of education is the students, but yet they lack the representation to make their perspectives and ideas heard. The Iowa State Board of Education is already leading on this front, allowing a nonvoting student board member to serve a 1-year term. Adding a resolution to encourage Iowa's school districts to adopt a similar approach to student board members would give students a better hold on their education.

In comparison, students who live in the state of California have been experiencing this student voice movement for about 45 years now. In 1972, the California state department of education reported that they encouraged local school boards to consider roles for students on school boards. About 30 years later in 2003, the California School Board Association estimated that 50% of California district school boards with high schools have a student board member (Fletcher). The encouragement that California enacted in 1972 carried through to have strong effects on half of the school districts in the state, and students want to see that same thing here in Iowa.

With the help of Representative Art Staed, a student-led organization was able to craft HR12, which addresses the benefits to add students to school boards. Un-mandated and completely up to the choice of each school district, this resolution would take the first step in encouraging school districts to establish student liaisons to its school board. This would let both school districts and students know that the state of Iowa is in support of allowing students to express their perspectives and ideas on their own school boards!

### **Recommended Action**

SIYAC strongly supports HR12 which encourages student liaisons on school boards. The government has an obligation to help and meet the needs of Iowa's next generations. Giving a voice to those who are being directly impacted by new district policies will help better improve school and education systems.

## **Sources**

1. <https://www.legis.iowa.gov/law/iowaCode>
2. Fletcher, A. and Kunst, K. (2015) Students on School Boards Toolbox. Olympia, WA: SoundOut. Retrieved [11/21/2017] from <http://soundout.org/students-on-school-boards-toolbox>.